

HANDHELDS

FAQ

Q The government has just increased the penalty for using a mobile phone when driving to a £60 fine and three points on your licence. Is there any way I can make phone calls without incurring the wrath of the police?

A If you want to use your phone when driving you'll need a Bluetooth headset, which communicates wirelessly with your mobile. To use a headset you'll need a mobile that supports Bluetooth.

Bluetooth headsets have rechargeable batteries, and cost as little as £15 from www.mymemory.co.uk. They usually have buttons to control the volume, answer calls and hang up, so you don't have to fiddle with your phone on the move.

Some GPS systems also let you make wireless calls. TomTom's Go 510 can connect to your mobile via Bluetooth, and you can dial numbers with the touchscreen. If you have a compatible mobile, the unit can even read your contacts from your phone.

Chris Fynamore

Components and handhelds expert

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SONY ERICSSON W950i

★★★

£360 inc VAT (SIM-free); £80 on £30 a month contract

Sony Ericsson's first Walkman phones were normal compact handsets with improved music player programs, large Memory Sticks and copious amounts of Walkman branding. The W950i is different. It's a proper smartphone, based on the UIQ edition of the Symbian operating system and operated with a touch screen and stylus. It's a great-looking handset, too. It's slim and light with clean lines, and even the orange detailing is tasteful.

Unfortunately, the fascia's plastic feels cheap and the keypad is a bit of a disaster. The keys are flush with the phone, so they don't spoil its lines, but they are difficult to press and rapid texting is almost impossible. You're better off using the stylus to write messages. It's possible to use most of the phone's other functions without getting the pen out. You can use the BlackBerry-style thumbwheel to scroll through menus and options, and there's a dedicated key to go back a stage in the menus. Unfortunately, the software runs slowly, and there's often a lag between selecting an option and anything happening.

The W950i has all the usual smartphone functions. There is an email client that supports POP3 and IMAP4 mail servers, and the phone can synchronise your contacts with Outlook Express, or your contacts and calendar with Outlook. There is also an excellent web browser, which reformats pages to fit the screen and runs smoothly.

The W950i is really all about music, though. To this end, it has 4GB of storage, which is enough for around



1,000 songs. Getting music on to the player is easy. You can either use the Disc2Phone application, which automatically encodes music from CD or from audio files to a bit rate and format compatible with the phone, or transfer songs with the supplied USB cable. The phone can play MP3 and AAC files. The supplied headphones plug right into your ear, so they block most outside noise. They also leak very little, so you won't annoy those around you. The phone comes with an adaptor that lets you plug in your own headphones if you wish, and there is a remote control on the cable.

The W950i sounds great through the supplied headphones, but the Walkman application is a pain to use. You can sort your tracks by artist, album and 'moods', which include Happy, Sad, Energetic and Chilled. Normal music collections are organised by genre, not mood, so if you want to use this feature you'll have to go through and tag all the tracks yourself. Once an album is playing, you can use the

scroll wheel to skip tracks, but there is a delay of a few seconds between selecting the new track and it starting to play. If the phone rings in the middle of a song the track will pause, but when you try to go back to it after the call it often refuses to resume playback.

Sony Ericsson's W950i looks great, but the operating system is slow and the Walkman application feels buggy. A compact Sony Ericsson Walkman phone such as the W810i is better.

Chris Fynamore

SUMMARY

- ✓ Great sound; plenty of storage
- ✗ Slow operating system
- ✗ Expensive

SMARTPHONE Tri-band and 3G, 240x320 pixel 262,144-colour LCD, 4GB internal storage, 7 hours' talk time, 14 days' standby, 106x54x15mm, 112g
PART CODE W950i

SUPPLIER www.expansys.com (SIM-free), www.vodafone.co.uk (contract)
DETAILS www.sonyericsson.co.uk

Also consider...

TOMTOM One Regional

★★★★★

£163 inc VAT

PRICE CUT!



TomTom's One Regional is a good-

value GPS system with UK and Ireland maps.

It's easy to use, comes with a touch screen and has big icons that you can operate with your finger. Navigation is accurate and the voice prompts are clear. It's the best-value standalone GPS we've seen.



STANDALONE GPS 3½in 320x240 resolution display, integrated SiRFstar III receiver, TomTom Navigator software, Navteq UK and Ireland maps, 1GB SD card, 174g PART CODE 5N00.110

SUPPLIER www.comet.co.uk DETAILS www.tomtom.com
✓ Fast software; easy to use FULL REVIEW Mar 2007

SONY ERICSSON K800i

★★★★★

£225 inc VAT SIM-free; free to £30 on £30-per-month contract

PRICE CUT!



The K800i is Sony Ericsson's first 3-megapixel camera phone. The phone's camera

focuses more quickly than any camera phone we have seen and it's even possible to capture action shots with the BestPic mode. There's also a proper flash, so shots taken in darkness are properly illuminated. The photos have little noise and are fine for 6x4in prints. Apart from a wobbly keypad, the phone is easy to use. This is the best camera phone available and it's good value on contract.



MOBILE PHONE Tri-band GSM, 3G, 240x320-resolution LCD, 64MB internal memory, Memory Stick Micro slot, USB, Bluetooth, 3-megapixel camera, 47x22x105mm, 115g

PART CODE K800i SUPPLIER Vodafone/Orange/T-Mobile/O₂ DETAILS www.sonyericsson.co.uk ✓ Superb camera
✗ Uses Memory Stick Micro cards FULL REVIEW Dec 2006

ARCHOS 404 Camcorder

★★★★★

£250 inc VAT

Portable media players (PMPs) have built-in hard disks and LCD screens, which enable them to play video as well as audio files. Archos's 404 Camcorder takes this a step further with its integrated digital video camera.

The 404 has the same brushed metal finish as most Archos PMPs, but it's more compact. The main reason is its smaller screen, which has a normal 4:3 rather than widescreen aspect. This means widescreen films are letterboxed. You can use the Pan and Scan mode to crop the image and fill the screen, although you'll lose out on quality, not to mention part of the programme you're watching. Menus and text aren't that clear, but video files have vibrant colours and high contrast.

Archos's menu system keeps improving, but it's still confusing. There are five buttons on the right of the player, each with two functions, as well as OK and Cancel buttons and directional keys. We would prefer a simple directional keypad and a couple of selection buttons.

Getting your media files on to the 404 is easy. You can either copy files straight to the player's hard disk or use Windows Media Player to synchronise the device with your PC. Media Player will automatically check that the content you want to synchronise is compatible with the 404, and convert it to a compatible Windows Media Audio or Video format if it isn't. Windows Media Player shouldn't need to convert too many files, as the 404 has excellent file support. It played our MPEG2, Xvid, DivX and WMV test files, as well as MP3, Wav and



WMA audio. It could also play high-quality WMV files, and not just the jerky, low-resolution WMV Simple Profile that many PMPs support.

The audio playback application is excellent and lets you browse your music by artist, album, genre and year. Sound through the supplied headphones is muffled, but fine through a decent pair.

The 404's main problem as a media player is its battery life. Archos claims just two and a half hours of video playback, which isn't even enough to get through *King Kong*. What's more, no mains adaptor is provided; there's just a USB cable. For £20 from www.amazon.co.uk you can buy a power supply that will accept a USB plug.

The 404's camera has a tiny lens, but copes reasonably well with low light. Videos have a high frame rate and are far better than those taken with a mobile phone.

Archos's 404 Camcorder may have a confusing interface, but it's a powerful media player with excellent file support. The main problem is its mediocre battery life, which is not good enough for a long journey.

Chris Finnamore

SUMMARY

- ✓ Easy to transfer content
- ✓ Comprehensive file support
- ✗ Mediocre battery life

PORTABLE MEDIA PLAYER 3½in, 320x240-pixel LCD, 30GB hard disk, plays MPEG4, H.264, MPEG2, WMV video (all up to DVD resolution); plays MP3, WMA, Protected WMA, Wav audio, 8 hours' music playback, 2½ hours' video playback, 100x78x15mm, 190g
PART CODE Archos 404 CAM 30GB
SUPPLIER www.argos.co.uk
DETAILS www.archos.com

CHOOSING A... Smartphone

Follow the steps to find your ideal specs

STYLE: Handset
OPERATING SYSTEM: Windows Mobile 5.0
SCREEN: 240x320; 65,536 colours
INPUT: Keypad
CAMERA: 1.3 megapixel
BLUETOOTH: Yes
DATA CALLS: GPRS
 Recommended minimum in grey

1 A smartphone's operating system – Palm OS, Windows Mobile or Symbian – dictates its basic features and what third-party software you can install. Windows Mobile 5.0 has the familiar look and feel of Windows, right down to a Start button, and is found on both handset- and PDA-style smartphones.

The only Palm OS smartphones available are Palm's Treo 650 and 680. There are four types of Symbian operating systems: series 60, 80, 90 and UIQ. Series 60, 80 and 90 are found on Nokia smartphones, while Sony Ericsson uses UIQ for its P900 smartphone series. Windows Mobile 5.0, Palm OS and Symbian all support third-party applications, and there is a vast amount of both freeware and commercial software available.

Unlike Windows Mobile 5.0 and Palm OS, Symbian can be customised by the phone's manufacturer and so may differ from phone to phone.

2 All smartphones come with a colour screen. A high-colour depth of 65,536 colours is important for viewing photos or video clips.

Users navigate and input information into a handset type of smartphone using the keypad and buttons or a jog dial. PDA-style smartphones usually have a touch screen, and both Windows Mobile and Palm have handwriting recognition features as well as onscreen keyboards. A few have a built-in QWERTY keyboard.

3 Cameras are common in smartphones. Resolution is limited, with three megapixels being the best you'll get. However, as most images will be viewed only onscreen or sent as video messages, this shouldn't be a problem for most people.

4 Bluetooth makes it easier to link your phone to a PC for synchronisation or wireless web access. For internet access, a GPRS or 3G mobile contract is essential. Data is usually billed per megabyte downloaded, but if you sign up for a data bundle when buying your smartphone it will work out cheaper.

NOKIA E61

★★★★★

£265 inc VAT; free on
£30-per-month contract

The E61 is Nokia's rival to the RIM BlackBerry. It is made for messaging, with a full QWERTY keypad and a large, bright 2.8in screen.

It's a large phone but it's light, with good call quality. The handset supports Push email, so messages are delivered straight to the handset without you having to schedule regular downloads. The web browser is also superb, and the E61 is excellent value on contract.



SYMBIAN SMARTPHONE Quad-band GSM, 3G, Symbian Series 60 Third Edition, 2.8in 320x240-pixel LCD, 65MB internal storage, 64MB mini-SD card, 802.11b/g, Bluetooth, 9½ hours' talk time, 17 days' standby, 144g **PART CODE** E61 **SUPPLIER** www.vodafone.co.uk (with contract), www.expansys.com (SIM-free) **DETAILS** www.nokia.co.uk Perfect for messaging No camera or headphones **FULL REVIEW** Sep 2006

NAVICORE Personal 2007 Multiplatform package

★★★★★

£130 inc VAT



Navicore Personal 2007 is a GPS navigation package for the Symbian operating system. The software mirrors the interface of whichever smartphone you install it on, so is easy to use. The navigation display and voice prompts are also clear, and there's a built-in speed camera database. It's a fast and comprehensive GPS.



GPS KIT Symbian Series 60, Series 80, UIQ compatible, Bluetooth SIRFstar III receiver, Navicore 2007 software, TeleAtlas UK and Ireland maps **SUPPLIER** www.mobilefun.co.uk **DETAILS** www.navicoretech.com Clear display; fast software **FULL REVIEW** Mar 2007